United Nations A/AC.96/1178

General Assembly

Distr.: General
4 July 2018
English
Original: English and French

Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme
Sixty-ninth session
Geneva, 1 to 5 October 2018
Item 4 (a) of the provisional agenda
Consideration of reports on the work of the Standing Committee
International Protection

Note on international protection

Report of the High Commissioner

Summary

This note reviews developments in international protection from June 2017 through June 2018. It reflects a pivotal period for persons of concern to UNHCR, and for host countries and communities, as the international community has worked towards adoption of a global compact on refugees.

The note is broadly organized around the comprehensive refugee response framework and key elements of the proposed global compact on refugees, recalling the centrality of protection and reflecting relevant developments from a protection and solutions perspective.

Furthermore, it examines the state of internal displacement worldwide, in the twentieth anniversary year of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, as well as the situation of stateless persons.

Unless otherwise specified, documents cited in this note are available from www.refworld.org.

GE.18-11062(E)
1811062

Please recycle

Contents

Chapter		*Paragraphs*	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1-4	3
II.	Centrality of protection	5-16	3
III.	Burden- and responsibility-sharing	17-20	6
IV.	Reception and admission	21-34	7
	A. Admission	21-22	7
	B. Reception and addressing specific needs	23-29	8
	C. Identification of those in need of international protection	30-34	10
V.	Meeting needs and supporting communities	35-42	11
	A. Education	36-37	11
	B. Employment and livelihoods	38-40	11
	C. Documentation and legal identity	41-42	12
VI.	Solutions	43-59	13
	A. Voluntary repatriation	44-48	13
	B. Resettlement	49-53	14
	C. Local integration	54-56	15
	D. Other pathways for admission	57-59	16
VII.	Conclusion	60	16

I. Introduction

1. In 2017, the number of people forced to flee their countries due to persecution, human rights violations, armed conflict, violence and public disorder, falling within UNHCR's mandate, rose to 19.9 million – up from 17.9 million at the end of 2016. In addition, 5.4 million Palestinian refugees fell under the mandate of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, while a further 40 million people were displaced within their own countries.

2. An upsurge in violence in the Central African Republic, ongoing fighting in the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen, and a combination of conflict and food insecurity in Somalia and South Sudan, continued to provoke displacement. Meanwhile, new internal and cross-border movements were fuelled by insecurity, including in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Libya, Myanmar, and the northern and central parts of Mali. The deteriorating situation in Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) also triggered the movement of Venezuelans across borders, bringing the number who arrived in neighbouring countries since 2014 to over 1.5 million. While the peace agreement in Colombia was a critical step forward, several regions were affected by drug trafficking, illegal mining and the presence of armed groups. Violence and serious human rights abuses in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar compelled some 687,000 stateless Rohingya to flee the country between August 2017 and April 2018 in one of the fastest-developing refugee situations in two decades. In Afghanistan, violence and insecurity continued to trigger displacement, undermining the sustainability of returns.

3. Against this background, the international refugee protection regime remains more relevant than ever. In follow-up to the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants (New York Declaration), adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2016, 2017 saw stakeholders come together in a series of thematic discussions to advance ideas for the global compact on refugees. Building on over 65 years of law and practice, the early lessons learned from the application of the comprehensive refugee response framework (CRRF), and the outcomes of formal consultations with States in 2018, the global compact will seek to fill recurrent gaps in the international refugee response, including more equitable and predictable burden- and responsibility-sharing among States, through a multi-stakeholder approach. The year 2018 is, therefore, critical for refugees and for host countries and communities. Moreover, it marks the twentieth anniversary of the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement.

4. This year's note on international protection focuses on the centrality of protection, which has underpinned the preparations for the global compact on refugees. Organized broadly around the key areas of the proposed global compact, it reflects global developments from June 2017 to June 2018.

II. Centrality of protection

5. Protection is central to any humanitarian response and, in practice, entails activities aimed at obtaining full respect for the rights of individuals, in accordance with international humanitarian, human rights and refugee law. In other words, the humanitarian response enhances access to these rights, whether at the outset of an emergency, in protracted situations or in the search for solutions. Protection considerations permeate humanitarian actions on behalf of refugees and others in need of international protection, stateless persons and the internally displaced. This begins with, but is not limited to, strengthening the legal frameworks through which their rights are secured.

6. The legal framework for the protection of refugees includes, at its core, the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (1951 Convention) and its 1967 Protocol, as well as specific regional instruments. It draws from relevant international human rights instruments, international humanitarian law and other international legal standards. Consistent with its mandate, UNHCR works with States to support accession to the 1951 Convention and other relevant instruments, and to guide their interpretation and

application, including through engagement in national and regional legislative and judicial processes. The Office supported the development of the Arab Refugee Convention by the League of Arab States, as well as the reform of the Common European Asylum System. Promising legislative developments took place through the application of the CRRF, including in Djibouti and Ethiopia.

7. UNHCR supported the development of national legislation in almost 80 countries. In guiding the interpretation and application of legal protection standards, UNHCR issued "Guidelines on international protection on the applicability of Article 1D of the 1951 Convention to Palestinian refugees" (Guidelines on International Protection No. 13). The Office also issued numerous legal guidance documents and country-specific eligibility guidance. In November 2017, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) to promote international refugee law and adherence to international protection instruments, as well as joint activities for the protection of displaced and stateless persons. Following national consultations with governments and civil society in the context of the Brazil Plan of Action's triennial evaluation, three sub-regional thematic consultations were held, focussing on the quality of asylum, the eradication of statelessness, and comprehensive, complementary and sustainable solutions. As a contribution to the development of the global compact on refugees, States in Latin America and the Caribbean issued the "100 points of Brasilia"[1], containing numerous good practices.

8. UNHCR worked with States and partners on identifying stateless populations and on combatting statelessness, consistent with relevant international instruments, as well as to promote actions to end statelessness through its #IBelong campaign. Efforts focused on supporting accession to the statelessness conventions and the reform of nationality laws. The latter included measures to promote equality between men and women on conferring nationality to children, for example in Madagascar and Sierra Leone, as well as to simplify administrative procedures, including for civil registration. During the reporting period, Chile acceded to the 1954 Convention on the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, and Burkina Faso and Luxembourg acceded to the latter. Cuba eliminated a residence requirement for the acquisition of Cuban nationality for children born abroad to a Cuban parent, and Colombia established a mechanism to apply safeguards that prevent children from being born stateless, consistent with regional and international instruments. Brazil, Costa Rica and Ecuador issued regulations advancing efforts to identify and protect stateless persons, and reduce statelessness, including on naturalization. During 2017, a significant number of persons who were stateless or whose nationality was undetermined had their nationality conferred or confirmed, including in Indonesia, Iraq, the Philippines and Thailand, as well as in various countries in Central Asia.

9. At the regional level, the Banjul Plan of Action on the Eradication of Statelessness 2017-2024, adopted by the Economic Community of West African States and which came into force in June 2017, sets out concrete actions and timeframes. Since coming into force, Burkina Faso and Mali have adopted national action plans to eradicate statelessness. In October 2017, the Member States of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region signed a Declaration on the Eradication of Statelessness, committing to reform nationality laws and policies. A ministerial meeting on belonging and legal identity was held in Tunisia in February 2018, under patronage of the President. Convened by the League of Arab States, in partnership with UNHCR, the meeting resulted in the adoption of a declaration calling for children to have the right to a legal identity, as well as for equal nationality rights for women and men. Countries hosting Syrian refugees, working closely with UNHCR and partners, succeeded in reducing the percentage of Syrian children who were undocumented from birth, from 35 to 2.5 per cent, over the past five years.

[1] Available from www.acnur.org/fileadmin/scripts/doc.php?file=fileadmin/Documentos/BDL/2018/11590.

10. Those who have been forced into displacement, but who have not sought or have not yet succeeded in reaching safety in another country, also face protection concerns. The Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, established in 1998, continue to provide an important international framework for the protection of internally displaced persons (IDPs). UNHCR's engagement in internal displacement dates back more than 45 years and has been recognized by successive General Assembly resolutions. At the global level, UNHCR leads or co-leads the protection, shelter, and camp coordination and camp management clusters. It also steers 25 of the 35 country-level protection clusters and other inter-agency protection coordination mechanisms, including in the Central African Republic, Iraq, Nigeria, South Sudan and the Syrian Arab Republic. In September 2017, UNHCR finalized a review of its engagement in situations of internal displacement, with a view to working more predictably across the spectrum of displacement.

11. In Afghanistan, UNHCR strengthened protection for IDPs through in-kind assistance, cash-based interventions to cover medical expenses and the provision of legal aid. In the Americas, UNHCR helped develop local capacities in Honduras to strengthen land and property rights and help facilitate solutions, and supported the authorities in El Salvador with profiling of IDPs to improve the evidence base and facilitate an effective response. In Africa, UNHCR worked with partners in the Kasai region of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to collect data on IDPs and their vulnerabilities through area-based monitoring, and in the Middle East, the Office supported information campaigns to advise IDPs about their right to vote and facilitated voting inside a number of camps and settlements. Ukraine's efforts to address internal displacement were advanced by the adoption of an integration and solutions strategy, with support from UNHCR.

12. In some regions, environmental degradation, natural hazards and the adverse effects of climate change, including drought, exacerbated and altered the character and complexity of displacement, as seen in the Lake Chad basin and the Horn of Africa. Drawing on its normative expertise and operational experience, UNHCR worked with States and partners to protect and assist those affected by these phenomena. UNHCR also provided technical support to the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change on human mobility-related aspects of climate change, including through participation in the Task Force on Displacement of the Warsaw International Mechanism on Loss and Damage. UNHCR, Georgetown University and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) developed a toolbox[2] to support governments with planned relocation processes, for people who are at risk or have been displaced, which are participatory and undertaken from a rights-based approach. In light of the increasing attention to displacement related to climate change, disasters and natural hazards, UNHCR commissioned a report on challenges and opportunities in this area.[3]

13. The delivery of protection goes beyond promoting the adoption of legal standards and includes activities aimed at ensuring their respect in practice. Humanitarian action should not, however, substitute community-based protection mechanisms, but rather support them, in line with the principles of partnership and accountability. Consultations with persons of concern are essential to ensure their involvement in identifying and addressing needs and finding solutions. Such consultations were conducted in operations worldwide to inform planning and responses to displacement by States, UNHCR and partners.

14. UNHCR updated its policy on age, gender and diversity (AGD) in March 2018, to ensure that persons of concern can participate meaningfully in decisions affecting their lives. The policy reflects the fact that displacement and statelessness impact people in

[2] Available from http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/protection/environment/596f1bb47/planned-relocation-toolbox.html.

[3] Available from www.unhcr.org/protection/environment/596f25467/unhcr-climate-change-disasters-displacement.html.

different ways, and that understanding and analysing personal considerations are necessary for effective responses. The policy proposes concrete actions for implementation and measuring results in AGD-inclusive programming, including disaggregated data collection; participation and inclusion; communication and transparency; feedback and response; and gender equality in decision-making, community management and leadership. It also covers access to documentation, assistance, economic opportunities, and comprehensive services aimed at preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV).

15. Facilitating the participation of refugee youth remained key for UNHCR. The UNHCR Global Youth Advisory Council contributed recommendations for the global compact on refugees, including through the thematic discussions in 2017. In the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), UNHCR and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) convened national youth consultations involving government officials, civil society and displaced youth representatives, aimed at identifying opportunities to strengthen youth programming. In Pakistan, the Refugee Affected and Hosting Areas initiative focused on youth empowerment through education, skills training and livelihood support. UNHCR's Youth Initiative Fund supported over 40 youth-led protection projects, focusing on youth engagement and social cohesion. Sports initiatives are also helping promote social inclusion and safe spaces for children and youth. This includes the launching of an Olympic Refugee Foundation by the International Olympic Committee and the #SignAndPass campaign by UNHCR and the Football Club Barcelona Foundation.

16. Combatting discrimination and challenging negative gender stereotypes is also inextricably linked to protection. UNHCR has carried out initiatives aimed at bringing about social cohesion and bridging cultural divides. This includes supporting refugee food festivals in 13 cities in Europe and continuing its *No Stranger Place* series, which profiles refugees and their host families through powerful media stories.[4]

III. Burden- and responsibility-sharing

17. At the end of 2017, some 85 per cent of the world's refugees were hosted in developing countries, which faced economic challenges and had the fewest resources to be able to respond. The principle of burden- and responsibility-sharing is grounded in international law and in the recognition that hosting large numbers of refugees often places strains on the affected countries, and that a satisfactory response cannot be achieved without international cooperation. Broadening of the support base for refugee protection across the whole of society, and among national, regional and international stakeholders, remains crucial.

18. Welcome progress was seen in applying the CRRF, currently ongoing in 14 countries. Regional approaches in Africa and the Americas, led by the concerned countries with international support, have demonstrated their effectiveness in addressing both new and protracted situations. Consistent with the commitments made in the Nairobi Declaration and Plan of Action in March 2017, the Member States of the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) continued to pursue a comprehensive regional approach to durable solutions for Somali refugees, through more harmonized asylum policies, supporting access to public services, developing out of camp policies and promoting the right to work. The comprehensive regional protection and solutions framework (known by its Spanish acronym "MIRPS"), contained in the San Pedro Sula Declaration of October 2017, provides a mechanism to strengthen protection and enhance solutions through a multi-stakeholder approach and building on regional cooperation and burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanisms. In the Middle East, UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) continued to lead the Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan (3RP) for the Syria crisis, coordinating over 240 partners that support

[4] See www.unhcr.org/en-us/no-stranger-place.html.

national responses in the five main host countries. The 3RP, along with the Solutions Strategy for Afghan Refugees (SSAR), are good models for the application of comprehensive refugee responses.

19. Consistent with the multi-stakeholder approach underscored in the New York Declaration, UNHCR continued to pursue reinforced cooperation with development actors. UNHCR's partnership with the World Bank Group was strengthened, including through an agreement to establish a joint data centre on forced displacement. The World Bank's IDA-18 refugee sub-window for lower income countries and the Global Concessional Financing Facility for middle-income countries were instrumental in supporting more inclusive refugee policies and strengthening institutions. Welcome developments also included the publication of guidelines on addressing forced displacement through development planning and cooperation, by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee, as well as the issuance of a joint UNDP-UNHCR communication setting out parameters for cooperation between the organizations. The UNHCR-supported MENA Civil Society Network on Displacement convened consultations on operationalizing and strengthening the "whole of society" approach to promoting protection, assistance and access to solutions.

20. Efforts to engage other actors, such as cities and municipalities, as well as private sector partners, also intensified. Under the "Cities of Solidarity" initiative in the Americas, underpinned by the Brazil Plan of Action, States developed criteria for designating cities of solidarity. The first meeting of the Refugee Coalition for Europe, which aims to bring together and give a voice to refugee representatives, was organized with support from the Municipality of Milan and civil society. The private sector, including corporations, philanthropists and foundations, contributed to the discussion, bringing important experience to bear around technology, employment, skills training, renewable energy and other areas. Jordan's Azraq refugee camp became the first refugee camp powered by renewable energy, funded by the IKEA Foundation's Brighter Lives for Refugees campaign. In November 2017, UNHCR and the European Electric Association agreed to work together to provide reliable, sustainable and clean energy to refugees. With support from UNHCR, employer and worker groups advocated for refugee, IDP and migrant rights in the process leading to the adoption of Recommendation 205 on Employment and Decent Work for Resilience and Peace by the International Labour Conference in June 2017. UNHCR signed a letter of intent with the International Chamber of Commerce, focusing on collaboration on infrastructure, education and employment. Chambers of commerce worldwide can support the advancement of refugees in accessing the labour market and fostering private sector support.

IV. Reception and admission

A. Admission

21. The principle of non-refoulement represents a cornerstone of the international refugee protection regime, prohibiting the expulsion or return of a refugee in any manner whatsoever to the frontiers of territories where his or her life or freedom would be threatened. It requires, as a general rule, that States grant individuals seeking international protection access to the territory and fair and efficient asylum procedures or group-based protection mechanisms, notably in a large-scale influx situation. The principle of non-refoulement is a logical complement to the right to seek and enjoy asylum recognized in article 14 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the seventieth anniversary of which will take place in 2018, and is reinforced by non-refoulement obligations under international human rights law.

22. The principle of non-refoulement and the right to seek and enjoy asylum continued to be respected by most States, including by maintaining open-border policies. In Latin America, for example, Brazil, Colombia and Peru maintained open borders for those arriving from Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of), as did Bangladesh in receiving refugees

from Myanmar and Uganda in welcoming those fleeing conflict in South Sudan. At the same time, there were instances where those seeking asylum were unable to do so, either because they were prevented from leaving or denied admission because they faced physical and administrative barriers at borders. In some places, landmines and other explosive devices, prohibited under international humanitarian law, obstructed movements across borders. UNHCR cooperated with partners, including the United Nations Mine Action Service, to raise awareness about landmines. Some countries increasingly resorted to restrictive border management measures, limiting the ability of people to seek safety. Hundreds of thousands of people attempted to use dangerous land and water routes, with many refugees and migrants going missing or losing their lives at sea. Offshore processing, as well as the forced transfer of asylum-seekers to third countries where international protection was not guaranteed, remained a concern and undermined international cooperation and responsibility-sharing.

B. Reception and addressing specific needs

23. Some regions continued to face challenges associated with mixed movements, with many refugees moving irregularly alongside migrants. As efforts continued at the international level to strengthen migration governance through the development of a global compact on safe, orderly and regular migration, UNHCR actively supported the process, as foreseen in the New York Declaration. Building on its "10-point plan of action for refugee protection and mixed migration", UNHCR continues to enhance operational cooperation with partners; strengthen information, analysis and knowledge; and promote good practices to help States and other stakeholders respond more effectively to mixed movements. This includes supporting arrangements to identify, screen and refer new arrivals to appropriate services according to their needs, regardless of status. In Europe, UNHCR developed a border protection monitoring information management system to ensure systematic collection and harmonization of information on protection concerns faced by asylum-seekers at and near borders. The system will support evidence-based protection interventions, cross-border coordination and advocacy initiatives.

24. Mixed movements by sea remained an ongoing challenge. Along the western Mediterranean route, arrivals in Europe more than doubled in 2017 to over 28,000. Limited numbers continued to cross the eastern Mediterranean, while the central Mediterranean was the dominant route, particularly for those departing from Libya. In this context, an important feature of UNHCR's Central Mediterranean Strategy is the evacuation transit mechanism. Established in late 2017 in Niger, with the support of the Government and the European Commission and in cooperation with IOM, it enables the orderly processing of asylum-seekers and refugees evacuated from Libya. In addition to its strengthened operational engagement, UNHCR established the Central Mediterranean Core Group as a platform to seek commitments from States in offering safe and legal pathways to admission. UNHCR also developed a set of recommendations for States to prevent and respond to trafficking in persons and related abuses along the routes to Libya and Europe. In late 2017, UNHCR launched the second phase of an awareness-raising campaign about the dangers of crossing the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden to Yemen, including heightened susceptibility to human trafficking and other abuses, highlighting stories from survivors. The situation in Yemen remains highly complex, with major humanitarian and security challenges, and large-scale internal displacement alongside continuing refugee arrivals in mixed movements.

25. Refugees and other persons on the move faced SGBV, including domestic violence, sexual assault and rape. Positive counteractive measures included strategies to prevent and address SGBV; the hiring of refugee men and women to patrol camps and reception centres, report incidents to police and assist with maintaining law and order; and the installation of improved fencing, lighting, and separate sanitation and sleeping facilities for men and women. Safe spaces for women and children at risk were also established in many regions, along with other approaches to address the specific needs of women and girls, such

as the use of female health care professionals and interpreters. In the Americas, the Regional Safe Spaces Network grew from three to five countries, including Colombia and Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of). In Italy, UNHCR contributed to the development of standard operating procedures to assist torture victims and adopted an SGBV strategy. In Greece, UNHCR and the Ministry of Interior signed a memorandum of understanding to support refugee women and children at risk. A UNHCR report on promising practices in gender equality for Syrian refugees in the Middle East and North Africa highlighted successful initiatives, including measures to address SGBV. UNHCR also published research on the prevalence of SGBV against boys and men in the Syria situation, noting that child labour increased exposure to SGBV. The strategic use of resettlement yielded solutions for urgent protection cases, often including SGBV survivors.

26. UNHCR continued to focus on the specific needs of victims of trafficking and measures to counter this phenomenon. To reinforce cooperation in anti-trafficking, UNHCR, IOM and the Heartland Alliance co-lead a global protection cluster Task Team on Anti-Trafficking. UNHCR also participates in the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons and contributed to its "Issues brief no. 3 on trafficking in persons and refugee status", providing practical recommendations to States and practitioners on the links between trafficking and refugee protection. UNHCR supported States in achieving consistent implementation of asylum and other procedures aimed at protecting victims of trafficking. "Joint guidelines for the identification of victims of trafficking among asylum-seekers" were developed in cooperation with the Italian National Commission for Asylum, leading to increased referrals to national procedures.

27. In 2017, some 52 per cent of refugees globally were children. Argentina, Brazil and Panama established new national protocols to ensure children have access to asylum processes, taking into account their best interests and promoting family reunification and alternatives to detention. El Salvador and Honduras introduced inter-institutional best interest procedures to enhance identification and response capacity for children at high risk in the north of Central America.

28. To uphold the best interests of the child, UNHCR worked with partners to support specific arrangements for children, including alternative care arrangements for those separated from their families, guardianship arrangements, best interests determination procedures, psychosocial support and, where available, the inclusion of refugee children in national child protection systems. Several countries prioritized the special needs of unaccompanied children, including Brazil and Serbia. In Europe, UNHCR, UNICEF, and the International Rescue Committee established a consultative process to support States in strengthening protection responses for unaccompanied and separated children. UNHCR, the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF developed a regional strategic framework to address child labour in the Syria context, with an emphasis on promoting child protection; livelihoods and cash assistance for families; and access to quality education. UNHCR supported efforts by States and partners to reunite family members and advocated flexible approaches when considering who constitutes "family". Germany, which allows family reunification for refugees to whom it grants protection, is assisted by IOM in Lebanon and Turkey in the facilitation of visa procedures.

29. Best State practice involves alternatives to detention for persons in need of international protection. These include release into custody of local institutions and open accommodation in conjunction with welfare agencies and with reporting requirements. The detention of children for immigration-related purposes is never considered in their best interest, irrespective of their legal or migratory status or that of their parents, as it severely affects their well-being and development. In the context of UNHCR's global strategy to end detention, a number of countries continued to report positive practices, including fewer children detained in Lithuania, Malaysia and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In many cases, alternatives targeting children and their families were applied. Regrettably, however, asylum-seekers continue to be detained in many countries without consideration of alternatives. Challenges in reception conditions also persist, including overcrowding and the lack of capacity to identify and assist persons with specific

needs. The situation on Greece's Aegean islands, where thousands of refugees live in inadequate conditions and face protection risks, is particularly worrying.

C. Identification of those in need of international protection

30. Effective registration systems help States identify new arrivals, particularly in the context of large-scale movements, ensure the integrity of protection systems and prevent fraud and corruption. Registration facilitates access to assistance and the identification of specific needs, and provides information crucial to solutions. Brazil introduced new registration forms that better capture data on asylum-seekers and vulnerabilities in order to prioritize cases. In Greece, the authorities progressively increased their presence in registration and identification centres, allowing UNHCR to reduce its operational engagement, while maintaining a monitoring role. By May 2018, 5.3 million individuals had been biometrically registered by UNHCR across 50 operations. A global distribution tool, using biometrics to verify identity at food distribution points, is used in several countries, including most recently in Brazil and Uganda. UNHCR contributed to the development of recommendations on refugee statistics adopted by the United Nations Statistical Commission in March 2018, which promote disaggregated data on refugees, asylum-seekers and IDPs by age and sex.

31. The 1951 Convention does not elaborate on procedures for the determination of refugee status. Yet, it is generally recognized that fair and efficient procedures for individual refugee status determination (RSD) are essential for the full and inclusive application of the 1951 Convention and other regional conventions, outside the context of large-scale situations. Fair, efficient and adaptable RSD procedures require strong State institutions to safeguard their integrity and reach appropriate decisions consistent with international law. In large-scale situations, group-based prima facie recognition and, when appropriate, temporary protection mechanisms have also been used by States, with the support of UNHCR.

32. When States commit to transitioning responsibility for RSD from UNHCR to national institutions, sustained engagement is required. This may include the drafting of national refugee legislation. Indonesia and Thailand have taken initial steps towards assuming responsibility for RSD, while other States, such as Cameroon, Morocco and Turkey, are further advanced. UNHCR continues to support State institutions responsible for RSD, including through its quality assurance initiatives in Europe and Latin America. Consistent with the CRRF, UNHCR is seeking approaches that support State RSD systems more holistically, including through capacity assessment and development. Where UNHCR undertakes RSD under its mandate in lieu of a functioning State system, its engagement is driven by the potential protection impact, taking into consideration its ability to help refugees gain access to their rights and find solutions. Mixed movements pose specific challenges in determining international protection needs. The responsible use of differentiated case-processing modalities after screening, such as simplified and accelerated procedures, and the merging of registration and RSD interviews for cases with a presumption of inclusion, helps maintain fairness while contributing to efficiency. UNHCR has supported numerous States seeking to address their RSD backlogs, including through measures focused on quality and efficiency in decision-making.

33. Statelessness determination is equally grounded in international law and assists States in fulfilling their commitments under the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons. To be effective, such procedures need to take into account country-specific factors, such as the estimated size and diversity of the stateless population and the complexity of the legal and evidentiary issues to be examined. UNHCR welcomed the decisions by Brazil, Ecuador and Montenegro to establish statelessness determination procedures.

34. National security considerations and international refugee protection can and should be complementary. Recognizing that host States can benefit from integrated approaches that protect refugees while safeguarding national security, UNHCR and the International

Committee of the Red Cross developed an aide-memoire which provides operational guidance on maintaining the civilian and humanitarian character of refugee and IDP sites and settlements.

V. Meeting needs and supporting communities

35. Pending the availability of solutions, enhancing self-reliance allows refugees to contribute to, rather than depend on, their host country. It also prepares them to obtain durable solutions, notably voluntary repatriation. UNHCR is promoting self-reliance in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledge to "leave no one behind", the World Humanitarian Summit commitment to a "new way of working" and the CRRF. The move away from past practices of encampment and parallel services for refugees exemplifies increased recognition of the benefits of supporting access to national systems, including education and health, and labour markets. Such approaches reduce vulnerability and build human capital, while benefiting host communities through strengthened services and systems. Where humanitarian assistance is provided, it should be delivered in ways that benefit host communities, including where possible through local service providers. Many countries, including Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Kenya, Pakistan, Uganda, Zambia and others, remained steadfast in their generosity towards refugees and took steps to advance self-reliance, including through the provision of education, skills training and livelihoods. While increasing self-reliance often requires policy changes, such efforts must be pursued in ways that contribute to the infrastructure, services and economies of the host communities.

A. Education

36. In line with the 1951 Convention, the Sustainable Development Goals and the CRRF, UNHCR advocated the inclusion of refugee children and youth in national educational systems. With support from the Educate A Child programme, UNHCR worked to expand access to primary education, more than doubling its 2017 target. Connected learning, combining digital platforms with traditional classroom teaching, provided higher education for 3,500 refugees in Afghanistan, Chad, Iraq, Jordan, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Sri Lanka, Sudan and Thailand. Furthermore, 6,700 scholarships were granted by the Albert Einstein German Academic Refugee Initiative (DAFI) to support higher education for refugee students in 50 countries. In December 2017, IGAD Member States adopted the Djibouti Declaration on Refugees, committing to the inclusion of refugees in national education plans by 2020. In April 2018, the Nairobi Declaration brought additional commitments from States to make education systems more inclusive of refugees.

37. UNHCR continued to support expanded enrolment in formal education, with an increase in global primary enrolment from 50 per cent in 2016 to 61 per cent in 2017. A programme targeting youth was launched in Kenya, Pakistan, Rwanda and Uganda, aiming to increase skills training and educational opportunities, including post-secondary. In countries where barriers to education exist, such as language of instruction, lack of identity documents, tuition fees and legal residence status, UNHCR welcomed efforts by States to address them, including in Belize, Ethiopia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Panama and Turkey. In São Paolo, the Legislative Assembly approved a bill waiving fees for the validation of university degrees obtained by refugees. A regional cooperation agreement was signed with the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture to facilitate access to education for persons of concern in the Americas. In December 2017, UNHCR launched the Refugee Education Management System, which will help it manage education data for improved programming and monitoring.

B. Employment and livelihoods

38. Providing access to economic opportunities and promoting inclusion contributes to the economies of host communities and helps build self-reliance, enabling the displaced to meet their needs and preparing them for solutions. ILO Recommendation 205 encourages States to foster self-reliance for refugees by expanding access to livelihoods and labour markets in ways which support host communities. In the context of displacement, UNHCR and ILO cooperate closely to improve access to the labour market and strengthen implementation of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, including improved working conditions and social protection. The two organizations are also working to promote inclusive economic development in host countries that improves livelihoods for the displaced and host communities alike.

39. Access for refugees to the labour market and social security benefits may be constrained by the economic situation and development-related difficulties facing the host country. Taking into consideration such constraints, reliable information is required on the impact of refugees on labour markets and the needs of existing labour forces and employers. UNHCR continued to work with States to ensure access to vocational training, recognition of qualifications, freedom of movement and the provision of documentation. Costa Rica, Ecuador and Mexico are cooperating with the private sector to create refugee employment opportunities, and in April 2018, UNHCR and the OECD launched an innovative multi-stakeholder action plan for engaging with employers in the hiring of refugees.

40. In addition to enhancing protection, financial services (including cash-based assistance) facilitate access by refugees to livelihood opportunities and labour markets. In Mexico, the National Banking and Securities Commission will allow foreigners (including refugees) to use documents issued by the National Migration Institute as identification for access to financial services. In Zambia, the Central Bank agreed to accept refugee identification cards as proof of identity for receiving cash grants. In 2017, UNHCR delivered $502 million in cash assistance, one third of which was dedicated to meeting specific needs in 42 operations, including for education, to facilitate return and to reduce negative coping strategies such as transactional sex and child labour. Cash combined with in-kind assistance and services allowed UNHCR and partners to deliver context-specific responses that reinforced protection outcomes, allowing the displaced to prioritize their needs, while contributing to resilience through socioeconomic inclusion and access to national services and social programmes. UNHCR strengthened partnerships, including with the World Food Programme, to expand cash-based interventions, and with the United Nations Capital Development Fund to create a technical assistance fund to provide financial services to displaced populations. To advance financial inclusion, UNHCR strengthened its partnership with the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency in Jordan and Uganda, and with Financial Sector Deepening Africa in Rwanda.

C. Documentation and legal identity

41. Civil registration is critical to the displaced and serves as a major protection tool, notably for women and girls. It helps establish legal identity and prevent statelessness, and is key for accessing education, employment, housing and medical care. The Ethiopian Government has taken legislative steps to ensure access to birth registration and civil documentation for refugees. In Ecuador, the civil registry initiated a process to enrol recognized refugees in its database and issue identity documents that are identical to those issued to nationals, and Pakistan launched a country-wide exercise to register undocumented Afghans. The African Union Executive Council adopted a decision calling for member States to include refugees, IDPs and persons at risk of statelessness in civil registration and vital statistics systems. At a meeting of the Latin American and Caribbean Council of Civil Registry, Identity and Vital Statistics, 17 directors of civil registries agreed that regional cooperation is needed to grant a legal identity to all persons, including through

universal birth registration, and committed to work towards eliminating the causes of statelessness. For refugees, recognition of identity is essential to attain a durable solution. Proof of identity helps States obtain accurate information about the persons living on their territory, which is relevant for security and economic and social planning. UNHCR works with States, the World Bank Group and others to build national civil registration and national identification capacities, and facilitate access by persons of concern, including marginalized and vulnerable groups. Access to civil documentation, including birth certificates, is also prioritized in the 3RP.

42. Refugees and stateless persons are entitled to a travel document issued by their country of lawful stay, supporting freedom of movement and facilitating solutions. In October 2017, the Executive Committee adopted a conclusion on international protection (No. 114 (LXVIII)) on machine-readable travel documents for refugees and stateless persons, recognizing their importance and good practices in issuance worldwide. Several countries transitioned to machine-readable documents during the reporting period, affirming the conclusion's value for States and for refugees and stateless persons.

VI. Solutions

43. Ending displacement requires a mix of solutions, adapted to the specific circumstances of each situation and the needs of the population. This includes the three traditional durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration, as well as other pathways for admission to third countries which provide additional opportunities for protection and solutions. To strengthen UNHCR's engagement in pursuing solutions for persons of concern, UNHCR has created a Division of Resilience and Solutions. Beyond supporting the application of the CRRF, the Division will provide guidance in key areas, including education, livelihoods, self-reliance and reintegration. It will furthermore focus on collaboration with development partners and promote the inclusion of refugees in national services.

A. Voluntary repatriation

44. Voluntary repatriation is the preferred solution for many refugees. While enabling repatriation is first and foremost the responsibility of countries of origin, sustained support by the international community is needed to promote the conditions conducive to safe and durable return. As a starting point, it is important to recognize the right to return. Factors that have traditionally affected obtainment of this right include safety and security; good governance and rule of law, including at the local level; access to services, especially health care and education; restitution of land and property, and access to housing, civil documentation and livelihood opportunities. Facilitating return often necessitates measures, taken by a wide range of actors, including confidence- and capacity-building activities, effective returnee monitoring and reintegration packages. However, such actions cannot replace State engagement and the political will necessary to end conflict and build peace.

45. Bangladesh and Myanmar agreed bilaterally to an "Arrangement on the Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State" in November 2017 and to a corresponding "Physical Arrangement for the Repatriation of Displaced Myanmar Residents from Bangladesh" in January 2018. These arrangements outline important commitments by both governments to ensure the voluntary, safe and dignified return of refugees to their places of origin. UNHCR was not a party to these arrangements; however, in April 2018, UNHCR signed a memorandum of understanding with the Bangladeshi Government on voluntary, safe and dignified return. Nevertheless, UNHCR considers that the conditions in Myanmar are not yet conducive to such voluntary repatriation calls on Myanmar to take concrete measures to create such conditions, consistent with the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, including by addressing the root causes of displacement and providing pathways to citizenship. UNHCR is committed to supporting Myanmar in

creating conditions conducive for the voluntary, safe and dignified returns of refugees. Since March 2018, UNHCR and UNDP have been engaged in discussions with the Government of Myanmar on a tripartite memorandum of understanding on voluntary repatriation and on supporting recovery and development for all communities in Rakhine State.

46. In Iraq, ensuring protection, including through safe and sustainable returns, is critical to recovery and stabilization efforts. UNHCR advocated access to civil documentation and to accurate information about conditions in places of origin. It also supported family reunification activities. The application of the CRRF for the Somali refugee situation focused on attaining durable solutions, particularly supporting the conditions conducive to voluntary, safe and dignified return. This included measures aimed at strengthening security, building the capacity of the authorities and supporting the country's national development plan, for the benefit of returnees. With support from the United Nations Peacebuilding Fund, a Kenya-Somalia cross-border project aims to improve the reintegration of returnees in Somalia. Additionally, post-return monitoring was launched in October 2017 to profile returning Somali refugees.

47. In Afghanistan, UNHCR strengthened its return monitoring system. Nevertheless, sustainable returns have been made more challenging due to ongoing violence, insecurity and limited absorption capacity in return areas due to the lack of livelihoods, land management and adequate shelter. The fifth Quadripartite Steering Committee meeting, involving the Islamic Republics of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan, together with UNHCR, reaffirmed the significance of the SSAR. The parties reiterated their commitment to continue working together to facilitate voluntary return for Afghan refugees in safety and dignity, and to undertake joint resource mobilization efforts. Afghanistan's Displacement and Returnees Executive Committee continued bringing together key actors to strategize on minimizing the humanitarian-development gap and – adopting a "whole of society" approach – to address issues such as documentation, registration and land for returnees. UNHCR and the World Bank Group signed a data-sharing agreement to better support the reintegration of Afghan refugee returnees through strengthened data collection and analysis.

48. Following the meeting of the Tripartite Commission for the Voluntary Repatriation of Burundian Refugees, involving the Governments of Burundi and the United Republic of Tanzania, some 13,000 people were assisted by UNHCR to return home in 2017. UNHCR supported the voluntary repatriation of refugees to Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Sri Lanka and Sudan, among others. Concerns arose around forced returns to Nigeria, despite efforts and commitments made in the context of tripartite arrangements, including an agreement signed by the Governments of Nigeria and Cameroon, together with UNHCR. In Honduras, a project to identify potentially contested land in future return areas was launched with technical assistance from Colombia.

B. Resettlement

49. Resettlement is recognized as a strategic tool for achieving protection and solutions, but it is also a tangible burden- and responsibility-sharing mechanism. Against a backdrop of large-scale forced displacement and constraints on global protection and solutions, resettlement needs identified by UNHCR have increased steadily since 2014. Currently there are an unprecedented 1.2 million refugees in need of resettlement.

50. In contrast with 2016, when States made over 163,200 resettlement places available, 2017 saw a 54 per cent reduction to only 75,190 places. This declining trend in global resettlement quotas is expected to continue into 2018. The reduction has impacted UNHCR's ability to respond to emerging resettlement priorities, including in countries along the central Mediterranean route, as well as to maintain and expand resettlement for Syrian refugees and vulnerable individuals in the CRRF roll-out countries. As places offered by States for urgent and emergency cases continued to shrink in 2017, UNHCR could only submit some 2,090 cases in these categories – a 40 per cent decrease from 2015.

UNHCR was nevertheless able to ensure that more than 10 per cent of cases referred for resettlement in 2017 involved women and girls at risk.

51. The resettlement system continued to face pressure linked to increased emphasis on national security and the desire of some States to use resettlement as a migration management tool. This further constrained UNHCR's ability to ensure protection for the most vulnerable refugees, including those with heightened protection risks and serious medical conditions. UNHCR advocated the continuation of resettlement programmes which were protection-centred, flexible and diverse. This included calls for the proposed European Union resettlement framework to ensure that opportunities for resettlement were focused on those most in need and that it effectively supported responsibility-sharing. More broadly, it is hoped that the adoption of the global compact on refugees will provide new momentum to expand the base of support for resettlement in the coming years.

52. Through the Emerging Resettlement Countries Joint Mechanism, UNHCR supported six countries with capacity development and technical advice to develop or expand their resettlement and humanitarian admission programmes. UNHCR also invested in the new Global Refugee Sponsorship Initiative, which promotes and supports community-based sponsorship, and worked with some resettlement countries on protection-sensitive in-country processing programmes to resettle extremely vulnerable IDPs from northern Iraq. In El Salvador, Guatemala and Honduras, UNHCR facilitated the resettlement of individuals at heightened risk through the protection transfer arrangement.

53. Leveraging the interest of an increasing number of States in resettlement, UNHCR continued to apply the Resettlement Core Group model to specific situations, including for Syrian refugees and in the context of the central Mediterranean situation. UNHCR also partnered with States in coordinating and ensuring predictable longer-term resettlement opportunities for particular groups of refugees. UNHCR launched a resettlement innovation project to take stock of its processes and map good practices in the field. In Nepal, the large-scale Bhutanese resettlement programme drew to a close, with over 112,000 refugees resettled to third countries over the past decade.

C. Local integration

54. Countries that support the local integration of refugees deserve support. Numerous countries, notably in the industrialized world and Latin America, have found it advantageous and in their interest to embrace the local integration of refugees, including by providing durable legal status and naturalization, as foreseen in Article 34 of the 1951 Convention, where appropriate. In Guinea-Bissau, the Government decided to grant citizenship to refugees living in a protracted situation. Zambia implemented its decision to provide long-term residency to former Rwandan refugees. In Chile, an initiative launched in 2017 allows access to nationality for people registered under non-citizen status and children born to foreign parents. Despite these advances, the challenges in implementing local integration programmes, particularly in large-scale situations, are acknowledged.

55. Cities and municipalities in the Americas continued to adopt policies that support integration and inclusion, with help from the private sector. For example, the municipality of Quito launched a programme that certifies local businesses which meet inclusion standards. Mexico City signed an agreement with UNHCR aimed at fostering the inclusion of asylum-seekers and refugees in social security programmes, while a similar initiatives was undertaken in São Paolo. In Italy, UNHCR works with local authorities and civil society to encourage good relations between refugees and host communities. Italy's National Integration Policy was drafted in consultation with refugees and envisages specific measures for asylum-seekers on reception, housing and employment. In the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the strategy for integrating refugees is complemented by specific procedures for unaccompanied children and those considered vulnerable. In Poland, the city of Gdansk developed an integration model which was rolled out to 11 other

cities in 2017. In April 2018, the OECD published research from 72 cities on local approaches to integration, accompanied by a checklist for cities and regions to use in promoting integration.

56. Successful local integration programmes require efforts from all parties, including refugees in their willingness to adapt, host communities in welcoming them and public institutions in meeting their needs. In some countries, significant additional support from the international community, taking into account the needs of receiving communities, is essential.

D. Other pathways for admission

57. Other pathways for the admission of persons needing international protection can facilitate access to protection and solutions, and alleviate pressure on host countries, particularly in large-scale and protracted situations. Such pathways also create opportunities for refugees to learn new skills, acquire an education and reunite with family members in third countries.

58. Although refugees sometimes find complementary pathways themselves, such processes may require the facilitation of administrative measures, complemented with protection safeguards. To this end, UNHCR helped support the establishment and expansion of complementary pathways, including in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, France, Japan and Peru, along with other States in the MERCOSUR region. A new partnership was established with the United World Colleges to expand secondary education for refugee students in third countries, and Talent Beyond Boundaries was commissioned to create a database of refugee talent in Jordan and Lebanon to facilitate labour mobility to third countries. UNHCR and OECD initiated a mapping of non-humanitarian entry visas used by refugees in OECD countries to help develop guidance on complementary pathways. UNHCR also supported the adoption of the African Union Protocol on Free Movement of Persons, Right of Residence and Right of Establishment, which will facilitate access to other pathways for admission.

59. Despite progress, refugees continue facing barriers and challenges in accessing complementary pathways, including being unable to obtain exit permits, entry visas and travel documents. Other challenges include a lack of adequate protection safeguards and strict eligibility criteria. UNHCR continues to support States and other stakeholders in overcoming these obstacles and providing guidance and technical advice on developing complementary pathways that are predictable, sustainable and protection-sensitive.

VII. Conclusion

60. The international community is now at a crossroads, with a number of promising advances in the context of the development of the global compact on refugees. This compact has the potential to mobilize the international community in support of a shared agenda, grounded in the fundamental principles of humanity and solidarity that could bring real change in the lives of refugees and the countries and communities that receive them. UNHCR looks forward to working closely with States and a wide range of partners to bring the global compact on refugees to life through concrete actions on the ground.